DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 485 FL 020 319

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TITLE Designing an Intensive English Program for Business People: Curriculum and Courses.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages and Communications for World Business and the Professions (10th, Ypsilanti, MI, April 3-5, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Communication; Continuing Education; Course Content; Curriculum Design; *English (Second Language); *English for Special Purposes; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; Outreach Programs; Program Descriptions; *Second Language Learning; State Universities; *Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS New York (Buffalo); *State University of New York Buffalo

ABSTRACT

An International Executive Program for non-native English speakers at the State University of New York, Buffalo, is described. The program is offered to executives, administrators, and students planning to pursue a master's degree in business who need to improve their English language skills. The program is offered jointly by the university's Intensive English Language Institute and the School of Management. Admission requires a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 550. Offered only in the summer, the program is divided into a 4-week intensive English component and a 4-week management component. This paper describes how the courses of the English component are designed to provide a broad range of language skills needed for graduate studies and professional careers. The courses include the following: oral communications and reading; listening laboratory; video laboratory; and writing. Extracurricular activities are also offered. Appended is a list of materials used for case studies, for reading, and for functional business English, and English-as-a-Second-Language texts used for the listening laboratory. (LB)

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DESIGNING AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM FOR BUSINESS PEOPLE: CURRICULUM AND COURSES

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Introduction

Since 1978, the Intensive English Language Institute and the School of Management of the State University of New York at Buffalo have jointly offered the International Executive Program for executives, administrators, and students planning to pursue a master's degree in business. The program is offered only during summer and is divided into a four-week intensive English component followed by a four-week Management Component. The objectives of the program are four-fold: to gain knowledge of U.S. management theory and practice, to improve proficiency in English language and American business English , to experience and enrich understanding of American culture and to appreciate the need for developing a global managerial perspective. The rationale for dividing the program into two consecutive components is to allow participants to improve and refresh their language skills prior to continuing on to the management courses requiring advanced skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing.

Approximately twenty students are selected to take part in the English component of the program. Admission requires a TOEFL score

of 550. Pre-MBA applicants must either have admission to a graduate school of business, management or related field or have research interests in management or a related area in the United States. Applicants to the Management Development Program must either have three years management experience or be assigned to work in the United States or conduct business in or with the United States.

Participants in the program are almost exclusively sent by their company or attend as part of a scholarship. Nearly 50% of the students are Japanese with the others representing a variety of countries in South America, Asia, and Europe. The professional background of participants in the past two years (1989 and 1990) is shown below:

Profession	Number of Students
Finance	10
Manufacturing	9
Professor of Business	8
Accounting	5
Trading	2
Retail	1
Computers	1
Insurance	1
Government	1
Unemployed	2

Of the forty students, 24 planned to enter an MBA program, while the remaining participants planned to return to their work after completion of the program.

This paper describes how the courses of the English component are designed to provide a broad range of language skills needed for graduate studies and professional careers requiring a good command

of English.

The English Component of the International Executive Program

Students in the English Component are divided into classes according to their level of English. For placement into oral communications and reading class, oral interviews are conducted by the instructors; for placement into writing classes, a writing sample is used; for placement into listening and video laboratories a listening comprehension test is administered.

The principal components of the English Component are (a) the schedule; (b) course objectives and contents; and (c) extra-curricular activities. Each of these is now presented in turn.

(A) Program Schedule

The English component begins in the second week of June and continues until the first week of July. Participants attend three classes each weekday for almost 5 daily class hours from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. as shown below:

8:30 a.m. - 9:50 a.m.	Video or Language Laboratory
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Business Writing
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Oral Communications and Reading

The class time ranges from 1 hour 20 minutes to two hours. Originally, all classes were 50 minutes in length and reading was a separate class. However, fewer classes and a longer class time enables teachers to cover more material than having several short classes.

After classes and on weekends, participants take part in extra-curricular activities offered by the Intensive English Language Institute. These include visits to local points of interest, entertainment events, homestays and company visits.

(B) English courses

The participants of the International Executive Program represent two groups: those whose immediate language needs are skills to pursue an MBA degree and those who need language skills for work-related purposes. The English Component, therefore, aims to develop skills needed for both study and work. The objectives of the English component are six-fold: (a) to improve participants' oral skills for group work and individual presentations; (b) to increase the efficiency of the participants' reading through skills such as skimming and scanning; (c) to develop participants' listening for conversational and academic purposes; (d) to help participants develop better note-taking skills; (e) to expand participants' knowledge of business correspondence; (f) to enable participants to organize and develop their ideas for expository writing; and (f) to provide

opportunities for students to practice their English outside of class with teachers, colleagues and members of the local community. These objectives are reflected in each of the courses in terms of the topics, activities and materials used.

1. Oral Communications and Reading

The objectives of the oral communications and reading course are as follows: (a) to improve overall proficiency and fluency in discussion and public speaking skills (b) to acquaint participants with the functions of English for specific business situations; and (c) to improve academic reading and comprehension skills for articles related to business.

To meet the objectives, the topics covered in class include

1. Problem-solving discussions
2. Case Study Analysis
3. Individual Speeches
4. Group Presentations
5. Pronunciation Exercises

The problem-solving discussions and case study analysis serve to increase general fluency and to teach the functions commonly used in discussion such as those for clarification, disagreement and expressing opinions. Organizing ideas, using transitions and manner of presentation are included in the individual speeches, which are videotaped so that feedback can be provided on an individual basis to each participant. Participants' comments indicate that analyzing the videotaped presentations individually with the instructor is a great help in improving their presentation

styles and recognizing their language deficiencies. Since in many business and classroom situations, groups are expected to work together and make presentations, a panel discussion and a debate are also included in the course.

The text used in the course to provide functional practice is Business Interactions by Candace Matthews (Prentice-Hall). Recommended texts for case studies are Case Studies in International Management, Case Studies in International Business, and A Case for Business English (All are from Prentice-Hall). Additionally, teacher-made materials are used for instruction of individual and group presentations. For a complete listing of texts and journals, please see Appendix A.

Although in past years, reading was a separate course, it was integrated into the spoken course in the last year to allow for the readings to serve as a basis for discussion. A variety of articles from business journals are used. Particularly, journals such as Management Personnel, Management Solutions and the Wall Street Journal Manager's Poll include short, clear articles and case studies for classroom use. Skills given priority are those needed to read a large amount of material within a short time. These include finding the main idea, skimming, and scanning.

2. Listening Laboratory

Students attend one hour and 20 minutes of listening class every other day, alternating with video laboratory. The objectives

of listening laboratory are three-fold: (1) to provide practice listening to lectures and interviews while taking notes; (2) to familiarize students with the reduced, fast speech of conversational English; and (3) to introduce students to English pronunciation including phonemes and stress and intonation patterns.

Each class session incorporates a lesson to meet the first objective as well as a lesson for either the second or third objective. That is, there are at least two and sometimes three different listening activities per class. A note here is that students enjoy doing cloze exercises of songs as a short respite from the other types of listening.

A large selection of materials is used for listening, not all of which is related to business topics, but rather to issues pertaining to American culture and international interest. For a complete listing of the materials used, please see the Appendix A.

3. Video Laboratory

The video laboratory is designed to develop both listening and speaking skills by having students view videotapes of current topics of interest and business with the supervision and instruction of a teacher. The class also provides an examination of some current American cultural values. Programs include news segments, interviews, and documentaries. In order for the class to be successful and not be viewed as "entertainment" participants are not allowed to watch passively, but instead are always given

tasks to complete either during or after watching. These tasks include answering comprehension questions, identifying main points, paraphrasing, summarizing and predicting. Additionally, discussion of the contents is an integral part of the class. During the first showing, vocabulary, expressions, and cultural points are explained. When time allows, a second viewing of the video is done to further understanding.

4. Writing

The purpose of the writing course is for the participants to learn to develop and organize ideas and select appropriate language for specific writing tasks. The objectives are (1) to become familiar with the appropriate style and format for letter and memorandum writing; (2) to learn the process of developing and organizing ideas for report and proposal writing; (3) to use the appropriate language for expository writing, including appropriate register, conciseness, and coherence. Grammar problems are attended to only as they appear in students' writing. For the Pre-MBA students, workshops on organizing and writing academic papers are offered in addition to the writing class. These workshops include methods of conducting research, a library tour, writing a bibliography and footnotes, outlinining and organizing a research paper. Writing texts used are listed in Appendix A.

(C) Extra-curricular Activities

To provide opportunities for participants to become better

acquainted with each other, their teachers and area business people, the program offers several activities and events in addition to the courses. These activities include tours to area points of interest, trips to art events such as plays and concerts, sporting events, a lake cruise, picnics, company visits, weekend homestays, and weekly presentations by business people from area companies.

Conclusion

In this paper, brief descriptions of the overall curriculum and courses for a short, intensive business English program have been given. For a program of such a short length as four weeks, it is difficult to evaluate the program in terms of improvements in the students' English. Certainly, based upon the students' classwork, improvements can be seen, yet these same improvements are difficult to measure by any standardized test such as the TOEFL test. Therefore, level of student satisfaction is used as a measure of program success. In the 1990 International Executive English component, students were asked to evaluate the courses and the program as a whole using a five point scale, with 5 being excellent, 4 very good, 3 average, 2 below average and 1 poor. The evaluation results for the English Component in general are given below:

Effectiveness of the English component: 4.36

Quality of the English component: 4.36

Extra-curricular activities: 4.7

Another sign of the success of the program is that without exception, the participants stated that they would recommend the program to others.

As in any program, there are student needs which cannot be addressed due to time and class limitations. For example, high TOEFL scores are not necessarily an indication of fluent speaking or sufficient listening ability. Thus, while the program centers on developing academic and professional English skills, students may lack daily conversational and survival English skills. Additionally, the two different groups of students, Pre-MBA and managers, have many differing needs, yet the program can address only those needs which overlap.

Through this presentation, it is hoped that those who are interested in starting or comparing their own business English program will have gained some insight into how one program's curriculum and courses have been developed.

APPENDIX A: A Listing of Materials Used

1. Materials Used for Case Studies

Texts

Grosse, C. and R. Grosse. Case Studies in International Business. Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1988.

Pote, M. et al. A Case for Business English. Prentice-Hall International: New York, 1988.

Sawyer-Laucanno, C. Case Studies in International Management. Prentice-Hall International: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1987.

Journals

Management Solutions

2. Journals used for Reading

Business Horizons
Business Week
Management Decision
Management World
Management Today
Personnel Journal
Wall Street Journal Gallup Poll

3. Text used for Functional Business English

Matthews, C. Business Interactions, Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1986.

4. ESL Texts Used for Listening Laboratory

Listening in the Real World (Lingual House Pub., 1982)
Stress and Intonation Parts I and II (Collier MacMillian, 1980)
Consider the Issues (Longman, 1987)
Face the Issues (Longman, 1990)
Advanced Listening Comprehension (Newbury House Pub., 1982)
Interview (Longman, 1981)

Continuation of Appendix A

5. Texts used in the Writing Class

(Advanced)
Batteiger, R. Business Writing: Process and Forms, Wadsworth Publishing Company: Belmont CAL, 1985

(Intermediate)
Buschini/Reynolds. Communicating in Business, Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, MA, 1986.